

VU Research Portal

Review of Bruce M. Knauff. [Review of: (1999) South coast New Guinea cultures; History, comparison, dialectic]

de Vries, L.J.

published in

Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde
1999

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

de Vries, L. J. (1999). Review of Bruce M. Knauff. [Review of: (1999) South coast New Guinea cultures; History, comparison, dialectic]. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde, BKI- 155.1*, 171-172.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl



Book Reviews

- Adriaan Bedner, Joachim Sterly, Simbu plant-lore; Plants used by the people in the Central Highlands of New Guinea; Volume 1: The people and their plant-lore; Volume 2: Botanical survey of Simbu plants; Volume 3: Ethnographical key. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1997, 239 + 323 + 275 pp.
- H.J.M. Claessen, Jan Rensel, Home in the islands; Housing and social change in the Pacific. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997, vii + 264 pp., Margaret Rodman (eds.)
- Peter van Eeuwijk, Norbert Kohnen, Traditionelle Medizin auf den Philippinen; Angstbewältigung und kognition bei Krankheiten. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992, 396 pp. [Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung 154.]
- C.D. Grijns, William A. Smalley, Linguistic diversity and national unity; Language ecology in Thailand. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, xv + 436 pp.
- Nico Kaptein, Ulrike Freitag, Hadhrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s. Leiden: Brill, 1997, x + 392 pp., William G. Clarence-Smith (eds.)
- Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, Raden Ajeng Kartini, On feminism and nationalism; Kartini's letters to Stella Zeehandelaar 1899-1903, translated and with an introduction by Joost Coté. Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, xxiii + 129 pp.
- Alison Murray, L. Manderson, Sites of desire, economies of pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, xii + 367 pp., M. Jolly (eds.)
- Chris Penders, Harry A. Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indië, Deel IV, 1935-1941. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1994, xciv + 485 pp.
- Kathryn Robinson, Henk Schulte Nordholt, The spell of power; A history of Balinese politics 1650-1940. Leiden: The KITLV Press, 1996, ix + 389 pp. [VKI 170.]
- Eric Tagliacozzo, Carl A. Trocki, Gangsters, democracy, and the state in Southeast Asia. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1998, 94 pp. [Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publication 17.]
- Gerard Termorshuizen, Tom van den Berge, Karel Frederick Holle; Theeplanter in Indië, 1829-1896. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1998, 307 pp.
- Lourens de Vries, Tom E. Dutton, Koiari. München: Lincom Europa, 1996, 77 pp. [Languages of the World/Materials 10].
- Lourens de Vries, Bruce M. Knauft, South coast New Guinea cultures; History, comparison, dialectic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, xiii + 298 pp.
In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 155 (1999), no: 1, Leiden, 145-172

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

Book Reviews

Indira Juditka Simbolon, *Peasant women and access to land; Customary law, state law and gender-based ideology; The case of the Toba-Batak (North Sumatra)*, 1998, xv + 324 pp. [PhD thesis, Wageningen Agricultural University.] ISBN 90.5485.887.7.

ADRIAAN BEDNER

Some highly interesting anthropological research, such as Bourdieu's studies in the south of France and Plaadje's on the Tswana, has been produced by authors who are both insider and outsider to the community they study. Already carried out occasionally in the colonial era, such studies have become more common following the rapid modernization of many societies thanks to the ability of a growing number of people to cross the border between the discourses of western scholarship and those of their community of origin. The work of Indira Simbolon adds a further dimension to this growing tradition, for – as she points out herself – she is not only a Toba Batak woman, but also a 'nationalist by upbringing' and a former NGO activist in the region where she carried out her field research. While Simbolon emphasizes that her research carries the marks of her upbringing, gender and background, she has certainly not fallen into the trap of bias, managing to attain a proper balance between the various scholarly perspectives she uses in her study.

The first of these perspectives is that of the historian. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the influences of church and state on Batak society since colonial times, and the connected shifts in *adat* relating to the main objects of her study: gender relations and relations to land. Much attention is paid to the use of power for the benefit of the colonial and the post-colonial state, and to the question of what role state courts have played in this context.

The second perspective is that of the anthropologist. One of her case studies depicts in detail the situation of relations to land 'in relative normalcy' – that is, when these are not much influenced by external threats like industrial projects which require land. This is then juxtaposed with three case studies in which 'normalcy' is disturbed by interference in the name of

development. The cases all concern the acquisition of land and differ mainly in the nature and the amount of capital invested: state plus foreign capital, Indonesian-Chinese plus foreign capital, and Batak capital respectively. It is shown that there is a close relation between the type of capital and the type of conflict between the local people and the state-supported entrepreneurs.

The third perspective is provided by gender studies. Its object is mainly the problematic issue of the nature of women's land rights under *adat* law, and how, in spite of the state's claim to promote gender equality, these are undermined rather than reinforced by the transformation of *adat* rights into 'modern' rights. The author also shows how during land conflicts gender differences are reinforced, and women assume roles quite different from those played by men. In the end these processes, and notably the influence of the ruthless New Order development policies, deeply influence local people's relations to land.

These different perspectives yield a very rich, but also complex book. For this reason some readers may want to use it mainly as a work of reference, while others will prefer to skip the theoretical parts that are not directly relevant to their own field of study. Nonetheless, the various perspectives are well-linked and the entire book is worth reading.

Almost inevitably, a project as ambitious as this will have its weaker points. Occasionally confusing, for instance, is the ambivalence of the author with respect to state influence. While she criticizes the domination of local communities by the New Order state, especially where the imposition of its system of land rights is concerned, some other types of state influence – for instance the attempt to improve the rights of Toba Batak women by means of the state courts – are positively valued. Likewise, the fact that in one of the conflicts described (the Sugapa case) the local people ultimately regained control over their land is not really appreciated in the final analysis, nor explained. The problem is that the standard for such normative evaluation is never made explicit. This is connected to the fact that Simbolon often portrays the state as a single, monolithic actor instead of a plural entity – although in Chapter 3, conversely, the pluralist view is emphasized. Although useful to some extent, the 'monolithic' approach tends to conceal the distortions of state policy and struggles between various state agencies that are so aptly illustrated in Chapter 3. As Tamanaha (1993:210-1) has pointed out, failure to acknowledge the political nature of law is a weakness of many 'legal pluralist' studies, which tend to discuss the legitimacy of local and national social orders in terms of competing legal systems instead.

A related ambiguity arises from the fact that Simbolon does not define certain important concepts the meaning of which is not always obvious (at least to me) from their context. Take, for instance, the following statement:

'The overwhelming propensity of the post-colonial state towards a unitary system of law and economic development has legitimized the claim that it is the state, and not the different local adat communities, that is the rightful land proprietor.' (pp.107-8.)

Legitimation by propensity, in the eyes of the state or society, or a part of society? And what does 'rightful' mean in this context? Such questions are not readily answered.

In spite of these criticisms, I highly recommend this work to anyone interested in land law, development studies, gender issues or Indonesian anthropology. That it has something to offer to scholars in all of these fields is in itself an outstanding achievement.

Reference

Tamanaha, B.Z., 1993, 'The folly of the "social scientific" concept of legal pluralism', *Journal of Law and Society* 20-2:192-217.

Joel S. Kahn (ed.), *Southeast Asian identities; Culture and the politics of representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998, viii + 273 pp. ISBN 981.3055.78.2 (paperback), 981.3055.79.0 (hard cover). Price: USD 29.00 (paperback).

DMITRI VAN DEN BERSSELAAR

The worldwide resurgence of cultural politics has been a popular topic for scholarly analysis for the last fifteen years. Politics of representation have been studied in many different ways, including – very extensively – as part of the globalization debate in which most contributors to the present volume situate their papers. When there is already such an extensive literature on the topic, what is the relevance of yet another collection of papers? Of course we can never be reminded too often of the fact that even in Southeast Asia – until very recently generally perceived in terms of globalization, modernity, and economic growth – culture has always been a central aspect of politics. This is shown in each of the chapters of *Southeast Asian identities*.

Of the eight contributions, four deal with the construction of forms of cultural identification by dominant discourses. Chua Beng Huat's chapter on

'Racial-Singaporeans' deals with the attempts of the Singapore state to construct a national identity, concluding that cosmopolitanism and primordialism are interconnected and that cultural identities are fragmented. Like most contributions to this volume the paper addresses this topic in rather abstract terms, without attention to the experience of the agents. Nirmala Puru Shotam's contribution, also on Singapore, is probably the only exception to this rule. She clearly articulates the perspective of those concerned in the first pages of her paper, but fails to do so in her main argument: an interesting discussion of the construction of 'race' through colonial censuses. Albert Schrauwers' contribution on the ethnogenesis of the To Pamona in Indonesia provides an interesting discussion of how 'knowledge' was created by missionaries and colonialism, and how this knowledge, rather than describing ethnographic reality, created these realities. The paper by Ariel Heryanto on Chinese Indonesians shows how Chinese were first stigmatized as the Other that was needed to define Indonesian-ness, but have recently become more accepted and are no longer the prime target of riots (unfortunately, recent history has caught up with many of the contributions).

Three papers deal with globalization. Craig J. Reynolds shows how globalization is not only a concern of contemporary Western scholars, but has been central to the discussions of intellectuals in Thailand for more than a century. The papers by Rachel A. D. Bloul and Wendy Mee, respectively on gender and global Islamic discourse and on Malaysians on the internet, show how ostensibly global discourses leave room for the articulation of particularistic national cultural claims. Finally, Goh Beng Lan's paper on the cityscape of modern Malaysia deals with the political interaction of two apparently diverse discourses: on the one hand the modernist, economic growth-oriented discourse of the Malaysian government and the financial sector, and on the other a discourse on the defence of Malay culture. It shows how in economically booming Penang, one group successfully redefined its status from relative outsiders into indigenous Malay.

How relevant is this book as a contribution to our general theoretical understanding of identity politics? The starting point for most contributions is Anderson's insight that identity is neither primordial nor the product of cynical manipulations of individuals to achieve economic or political goals, but rather imagined collectively through discourse. This is a sensible starting point, but not very new or original. In this sense, while many authors provide interesting data, the papers fail to push back the limits of our understanding. Nor, as I mentioned above, do they solve the continuing problem of how to address the perceptions of ordinary people regarding their identities; all contributions focus either on the state or on intellectuals. Most papers hint at the connection between globalization, modernity and economic boom

on the one hand, and cultural politics on the other, but the only paper to explore this issue systematically is Goh Beng Lan's.

In the introduction to the volume the editor goes beyond the theoretical implications of the contributions, indicating the relevance of the concept of 'post-nationalism'. While this concept (explored in some of Kahn's earlier publications) may be an important one, *Southeast Asian identities* does not provide us with examples of the insights it may provide. In the end, I think this volume contains interesting case studies for those working on the region. Its importance to our theoretical understanding of the politics of representation is less clear.

Jan Rensel and Margaret Rodman (eds), *Home in the islands: Housing and social change in the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, vii + 264 pp. ISBN 0.8248.1682.X (cloth), 0.8248.1934.9 (paperback). Price: USD 39.00 (cloth), USD 24.95 (paperback).

H.J.M. CLAESSEN

This book focuses on 'ordinary' houses, for it is here that 'humanity's relationships with housing' comes most clearly to the fore. These relationships have been influenced by external factors such as government regulations and missionary prescriptions. References are supplied to literature on housing outside the Pacific area, but Dutch publications (for instance on Indonesia – see the list given by P. Nas in BKI 154-1) are not included. The book is well written, and contains maps illustrating specific housing situations. The level of abstraction is relatively low, however, and no general theories come to the fore.

The book contains the following case studies. Rensel, first of all, gives an account of changes in the style, materials and construction techniques of Rotuman houses under the influence of Catholic and Methodist missionaries. Traditionally the making of a house was a matter for the whole extended family, but nowadays hired labourers build the concrete houses. Returning migrants, however, prefer to have a house built in the traditional way with the help of their kin groups. Rensel considers this to indicate the 'persistence of powerful cultural symbolism'. In Chapter 3, Shaw reports on how the government has caused significant changes in housing among the Samo of Papua New Guinea. The end of the traditional pattern of constant raiding here also ended the need for defensive structures, leading to the concentration of smaller houses in villages. This puts a lot of pressure on the sur-

rounding land and resources. Chowning (Chapter 4) traces changes in residential patterns and housing styles in New Britain under influence of the colonial government and of Methodist missionaries. Traditionally people lived in hamlets, where the residents regarded one another as kin and shared food and daily activities. The abolition of warfare removed an important reason for dispersed settlement, 'and men began to spend much more time with their wives'. Men's houses were abandoned and the hamlet unity disappeared in favour of a (larger) village identity. Dominy (Chapter 5) describes changes in New Zealand sheep stations, where the large hired staff made way for the contemporary 'family farm'. Flinn (Chapter 6) describes changes on the Micronesian atoll Pollap, where people migrated to the state capital on nearby Weno. Traditional social relationship based on kinship, gender, and age were replaced by a pattern of social differentiation mainly based on employment, which conflicts with the traditional values of reciprocity and generosity. Samoan migrants to New Zealand (Chapter 7) face problems caused by the limited living space in the houses allotted to them. They found, according to Macpherson, a practical solution by adding garages, where meetings could be held and guests entertained. Similar problems faced Samoans who migrated to Honolulu (Chapter 8, by Franco and Aga). They now live in sixteen-story high-rise towers where they cannot host large groups of family members and where 'community observation of behavior' is impossible. This leads to limited supervision of children and growing isolation. In Chapter 9 Modell describes the problems of Hawaiians who are homeless in their own land. The solutions provided thus far are far from satisfying.

The book contains a wealth of information on houses, housing, and problems connected with changes in traditional social patterns in Oceania. It also shows that most people succeed quite well in coping with new or changing circumstances, and that traditional values make place for new ones which are better adapted to the changed situation.

Norbert Kohnen, *Traditionelle Medizin auf den Philippinen; Angstbewältigung und Kognition bei Krankheiten*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992, 396 pp. [Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung 154.] ISBN 3.515.05402.2. Price: DM 88.-.

PETER VAN EEUWIJK

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on local health care systems in Southeast Asia. Kohnen, a physician by training, carried out research in the small fishing village of Cabuntog on Siargao (Province Surigao del

Norte), an island northeast of Mindanao, from 1983 to 1985. His findings were originally submitted as a German *Habilitation* thesis, of which this book is a revised version. It offers a close insight into the folk or traditional medicine of Cabuntog. Kohnen focuses his study on local healers: their diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic methods, and their socioeconomic backgrounds. The traditional health sector is carefully depicted with the aid of interesting case studies and well-chosen photos. This thorough description of traditional local medicine on Siargao island reveals close similarities with medical systems in northeastern regions of Indonesia (North Sulawesi and the Moluccas).

The concepts, experiences and classifications of illness among Cabuntog villagers probably need to be located in the popular or lay health sector and not exclusively in the realm of 'tradition'. They are very heterogeneous and appear to be strongly influenced by professional medicine. A clearer look at these different cognitive origins might have led to a better arrangement of the book. In this study the popular sector is regarded as limited to emic notions of health and illness, while lay preventive/curative methods and social networks are not discussed. Conversely, we are not told a lot about the cognitive concepts of local healers, so that it is unclear to what extent the healers' medicine is still considered to be 'traditional'.

The medical reality of Cabuntog villagers reflects the medical pluralism which we encounter today in many Southeast Asian countries. The sick person's choice of treatments includes several options provided in his/her village, ranging from a 'magician' to a Primary Health Care doctor. Most of the author's data are based on ideal or normative health-seeking behaviour (what people say they would do if they were ill), and not on actual behaviour (what they really do when they are ill). Furthermore, the influence of so-called cultural factors (such as etiological notions) and systemic factors (such as availability and affordability) on therapy choice is not elaborated, although these are key issues in current discourses on illness behaviour.

The core elements of this study are undoubtedly the chapters on fear and ways of coping with it. Emotions and states of anxiety in relation to sickness in non-western societies have only very seldom been research topics in medical anthropology, and Kohnen gives us much new information here. His quantitative analysis shows a strong correlation between levels of fear and the perceptions of helplessness associated with lack of curative intervention or knowledge about an illness. According to Kohnen's study, traditional healers in particular successfully treat anxiety by offering explanatory models and an (often symbolic) remedy. The reader does wonder whether such anxiety is always exclusively linked to sickness, or whether it sometimes reflects a cluster of socioeconomic as well as health problems. Nevertheless, Kohnen has made commendable efforts to study anxiety in an indigenous society and

his many and interesting findings make this book a valuable contribution to research on emotional and mental conditions in medical anthropology.

Finally, two technical criticisms. In some chapters this book seems to overflow with purely quantitative tables; less would be more. Secondly, the bibliography has not been updated beyond 1986, so that recent discussions in the field are not considered. Though some of the author's conclusions are open to discussion, I wish to emphasize that this is a useful and much-needed work on local medical systems in the Philippines as well as on emotional and mental states in regard to illness.

Joachim Sterly, *Simbu plant-lore; Plants used by the people in the Central Highlands of New Guinea; Volume 1: The people and their plant-lore; Volume 2: Botanical survey of Simbu plants; Volume 3: Ethnographical key*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1997, 239 + 323 + 275 pp. ISBN 3.496.02629.4. Price: DM 372.-.

ROY ELLEN

At around 100,000, Simbu speakers represent one of the largest homogeneous language groups in Melanesia. Mainly agriculturalists, they are well-known in the anthropological literature from the studies of, in particular, Harold Brookfield and Paula Brown. With the publication of Joachim Sterly's substantial three-volume treatise, based on almost five years fieldwork between 1971 and 1984, we now have a major study of Simbu ethnobotany.

Volume 1 provides the ethnographic background and treats of Simbu perceptions of the plant world: how plants are categorized and named (including a discussion of etymology), a short comparison of Simbu and Nakane plant names, with various accompanying notes and addenda. The greater part (pp. 61-186), however, consists of an alphabetical list of vernacular plant names, with meanings, uses, botanical determinations, the geographical range of names, names in other languages, and names of cultivars where appropriate. Volume 2 presents the data on Simbu plant names according to botanical determinations arranged phylogenetically. Each entry is supplied with abbreviated ethnobotanical data. In addition there is a list of birds of ethnobotanical significance, and one for mammals. Volume 3, the 'ethnographical key', expands upon the cultural significance of individual plants, indicating their use at various stages of the life cycle, and comprehensively and systematically providing data on plant products contributing to the built environment, to clothing, fuel, adornment, food, gardening, animal hus-

bandry, hunting, handicrafts, and ritual.

There can be little doubt that the three volumes together constitute a significant contribution. They provide one of the few exhaustive ethnobotanical monographs on a Melanesian people, and will serve as a repository for future generations of knowledge which is now disappearing, as well as a standard source to be 'quarried' for comparative and synthesizing analyses. There are some excellent photographs.

As a theoretical and methodological achievement this work is more puzzling. The author asserts that Simbu plant knowledge is not ordered taxonomically, and that where classification is at all significant it tends to be ecologically rather than morphologically oriented. This implies that what Brent Berlin would call 'special-purpose' and 'general purpose' schemes are not, in practice, distinguished. There is but a single reality (Vol. 1, p. 28). Now, this is well-taken and resonates with other critiques of the orthodox model we owe to Berlin and his followers. In the context of Melanesian ethnobotany this aligns the author with Healey and Sillitoe (who elsewhere are mysteriously criticized), and more generally with Friedberg, Ellen and Hunn. Sterly avers that anthropologists have overestimated the significance of classifying and that what is important is naming.

The difficulty arises, however, with the author's root-and-branch hostility to 'theory', and the legitimacy he seeks for this in the phenomenology of Husserl (Vol. 1, p. 9), which he interprets as allowing local people to speak for themselves. Certainly, and especially in Volume 3, there is a lot of Simbu text: not just glosses for plants and artifacts but whole stretches of utterance. The value of this is not entirely clear, resembling as it does some of the more fundamentalist ethnoscience and post-modernist approaches which claim that since knowledge is deeply embedded in local language and meaning systems, its integrity is so violated through translation that wherever possible this should be avoided. While accepting that no anthropologist should ever underestimate the problems of translation, part of what makes anthropology scientific is its attempt to discover an analytic vocabulary and methodology which can surmount the problems of cross-cultural translation. To suggest otherwise is lazy avoidance of crucial issues. Moreover, it is anyway doubtful whether it is accurate to claim that the way in which the data are presented here – as lists ordered in various ways – reflect Simbu conceptualizations any more than do many other ethnobotanical descriptions.

The claim to be atheoretical is not only invalid, but also appears to be related to a lack of any interest in the very important developments which have taken place over the last few decades in the study of ethnobiological classification and ethnobotany. Sterly's particularism makes him appear quaintly isolated: there are no references to key authors, and his use of recent work from Melanesia is very partial. There is no reference, for example, to

Kocher-Schmid's research on Nokopo. All this, combined with a turgid prose style and a mode of presentation characterized by lists and the absence of sustained analytic development, makes this study less useful than it should be. While Simbu classifications may not be reliably rendered in the conventional ways suggested by others, that the Simbu classify is indisputable. More sustained scrutiny of the cultural processes involved and of correlated patterns of plant resource use would have been most valuable.

William A. Smalley, *Linguistic diversity and national unity; Language ecology in Thailand*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, xv + 436 pp. ISBN 0.226.76288.2 (cloth), 0.226.76289.0 (paperback). Price: USD 28.75.

C.D. GRIJNS

It was a pleasant surprise to discover the existence of this book, some time after its publication and almost thirty years after I had the privilege of discussing parts of a pre-publication draft with the author. The encompassing scope of the contents of this work and the detailed treatment of consciously selected topics based on years of fieldwork and library study are the natural explanation of this long period of maturation. Smalley presents a very full description and evaluation of the linguistic situation in Thailand, of which the Leitmotiv is summarized as 'language ecology'. He complements Einar Haugen's formulation of this concept, which includes the users of the language, the domains of use, concurrent languages, internal varieties, written tradition, standardization, and attitudes of the users, by adding to these the historical dimension (p. 6). His complete coverage of all aspects of 'the interactions between languages and their environments' produces a model for the study of sociolinguistics within a national framework. The theme of diversity linked to national unity is particularly interesting to Indonesianists, to whom this book offers an opportunity to learn about a partially parallel, and partially very different, pattern in an area with which most of them, including this reviewer, are not familiar.

As a theoretical framework for describing the communication networks in the country Smalley positions various categories of languages in a hierarchy based on language learning patterns and aspirations. At the top of the hierarchy is Standard Thai. It is both the official and the national language. Next come the regional languages: Thaiklang, Lao, Paktay and Kammüang, labelled respectively as Central Thai, Northeastern Thai, Southern Thai and Northern Thai. Then follow the marginal regional languages (among others,

Northern Khmer and Pattani Malay) and, finally, the 'other categories of languages', namely enclave languages, town and city varieties, displaced Thai, and marginal languages. 'Marginal' in this context means extending into Thailand as fringes of larger groups on the other side of the border (pp. 117-8). With one exception, the marginal regional and other marginal languages are not Tai languages (that is, are not descended from Proto-Tai).

Standard Thai is dealt with in Part I of the book. It is a variety of Central Thai and functions as the internal language of the country and external language of the regions. For 1989 Smalley estimates that roughly 19.5 % of the population was monolingual in Standard Thai, mostly including people of the upper classes (p. 14). For the majority of the population it is learned in school; partly due to its function as the written medium all over Thailand, its unifying effect is very powerful. The spread of a good knowledge of Standard Thai keeps close track of the successful development of education (pp. 14-5). Within Standard Thai two ranges exist: the ordinary range and a sacred range. The latter is a variety appropriate to speaking to and about royalty, monks and sacred objects. This sacred range of the language consists of 'a special set of vocabulary plus prefixes which elevate ordinary words when special ones are not available' (p. 55).

The regional languages, surveyed in Part II, are internal languages of respective regions and external languages for lower-level linguistic groups within the regions. This implies that speakers of other languages learn a regional language as adults and use it for wider communication. Marginal regional languages are internal languages of the marginal regions and external languages for lower-level linguistic groups within the marginal regions (Part III). The 'other categories of languages' function as internal languages only – that is, speakers of other languages do not normally learn such a language (Part IV; see also Figure II.1).

This linguistic hierarchy runs parallel to a social and regional hierarchy, deeply rooted in Thai history. At the top of the social hierarchy stands the King, while regionally the capital Bangkok is the summit. Bangkok is also the seat of the Supreme Patriarch of Thai Buddhism; the Buddhist worldview contributes decisively to the broad and stable acceptance of the traditional hierarchy (p. 345).

Smalley distinguishes three social dimensions of Standard Thai: the dimension of social distance (the public, consultative and personal speech varieties, the consultative variety being the basic one), the dimension of social relationship, and the dimension of social value (vocabulary may be elegant, simple, slang or vulgar). Varieties which reflect regional background are called self-categorizing varieties (Chapter 3). Kinds and degrees of multilingualism and language attitudes are dealt with in Chapter 17, where com-

munication distance is also discussed as another aspect of language ecology. Communication distance is defined as the degree of difficulty people have communicating with each other in a multilingual community. Five degrees of similarity are placed on a scale running from intelligibility through decodability, learnability, recognizability to no recognizability (p. 309).

In a penetrating discussion of the position of the marginal regional languages and the 'other categories of languages', Smalley deals with their chances to develop and survive in Thailand, always relating their position to the extent to which their speakers are able or willing to adapt to the national cultural and linguistic hierarchy. Of some eighty languages spoken in Thailand he considers only a few as moribund. A language, as he puts it, is endangered when children may stop learning the language of their parents during the coming century (p. 314).

In the final Part V, under the heading 'Trans-language issues', the topics of writing and education, change and development, language and ethnicity, and the 'minority problem as Thai problem' are discussed. While this Part V as well as Part I of the book ('Languages of the nation as a whole'), evidently provide highly valuable information and views about the general situation in Thailand, it is particularly these two Parts that lend Smalley's work the quality of an excellent textbook of sociolinguistics. Here we do not find a course of sociolinguistic theory illustrated by examples from various areas, but rather a thorough analysis of the complicated sociolinguistic pattern found in a particular country. For this analysis all tools of sociolinguistic methodology are applied, accounted for and lucidly explained by an author who combines expertise in both descriptive linguistics and pragmatics. His year-long experience as a Bible Societies' translations consultant in Thailand and later as a professor of linguistics in the United States enabled him to write very comprehensibly on highly technical matters as well as on otherwise complicated matters, as, for example, language and ethnicity (Chapter 18).

The book includes thirteen maps and some hundred tables and figures, a few examples of which may illustrate its richness: Distribution of Tai language families (map, p. 182); Dispersion of Mon Khmer and related languages (map, p. 305); Hypothetical Austro-Thai superstock (of which the Tai family is one part, p. 299); Sino-Tibetan superstock (p. 302); Languages in the hierarchy and language populations estimates (Appendices A and B); Speakers of Malay and Thai by religion (p. 159); Alien Chinese in Thailand (p. 209); Some components in Thai identity (p. 325); Interplay between social relationship and social distance in Standard Thai (p. 47); Types of varieties within Standard Thai (p. 51); Standard and non-standard elements (p. 35); Ordinary and royal vocabulary (p. 55); Kinship terms in ordinary and sacred

ranges, Social value in the sacred range (pp. 59, 60); Tones, Tone correspondences, Tone differences, Proto-Tai tones (pp. 90, 75, 103, 185); Four systems for transcribing Standard Thai (pp. 374-7); Languages classified by writing systems (p. 283); Organization of the Thai school system in 1986 (p. 22).

The long incubation period of the book is reflected in the bibliography. The large majority of the numerous references were published, in English, between the early sixties and 1992. This period coincides with the period during which modern sociolinguistics developed and was practised in Thailand more extensively than in any other Southeast Asian country. This fact also adds to the value of this admirable book for all students of sociolinguistics and no less for students of anthropology and history who are aware of the role of language in cultural and political development.

Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (eds), *Hadhrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s*. Leiden: Brill, 1997, x + 392 pp. ISBN 90.04.1077.1. Price: NLG 197.-.

NICO KAPTEIN

This beautifully produced and well-edited book originates from a workshop held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in April 1995. It contains 21 contributions written by 18 different scholars on various aspects of the history of Hadhramaut, on the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as the history of Hadhrami emigrants and their descendants outside their homeland. This Hadhrami diaspora was not global, but was limited to the areas around the Indian Ocean, in particular the Malay world, south-western India and the Deccan, the shores of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and the coastal areas of East Africa. The present book touches upon aspects of this entire diaspora.

The period dealt with is the 'modern colonial era', which begins approximately in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the European colonial powers became more and more interested in territorial expansion in the regions around the Indian Ocean, and ends when the British Protectorate over Hadhramaut was discontinued in 1967.

The wide geographical scope of the book is justified by William Clarence-Smith in his introductory survey in which he convincingly argues that the history of the Hadhramaut in the period under discussion can only be understood in relation to the history of its diaspora, which maintained strong sen-

timental and material links with its homeland. Furthermore, this chapter draws attention to the fact that the diaspora communities around the Indian Ocean played a much more influential role in their host societies in the field of politics, trade and religious developments than one would expect on the basis of the insignificant size of their homeland and their minority position abroad.

In line with the ideas expounded in the introduction, the book is organized thematically and not by region. It consists of four main sections, dealing respectively with local and international politics; social stratification and integration; religious and social reform; and economic developments. Within each section different geographical areas are dealt with and although at times the link between a certain article and another within the same section is not obvious, the degree of coherence of the book as a whole is satisfactory. Moreover, this coherence is strongly supported by an integrated bibliography and by a very good index which includes topics as well as proper names.

Apart from references to Southeast Asia scattered throughout the book, Southeast Asianists *pur sang* will also find a number of interesting contributions devoted entirely to this region: Mohammad R. Othman on the administrative and religious functions of the Hadhramis in the Malay sultanates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Huub de Jonge on Dutch colonial policy with respect to the Hadhrami immigrants in the Netherlands East Indies; Sumit Mandal on Arab ethnicity and politics in Java under Dutch rule; Peter Riddell on religious links between Hadhramaut and the Malay world, c. 1850-1950; Natalie Mobini-Kesheh on the Islamic modernist movement Al-Irshâd in Java; and Azyumardi Azra on the Hadhrami scholar from Batavia, Sayyid 'Uthmân.

The book ends with a chapter of refreshing modesty by Ulrike Freitag, dealing with some features of the diaspora from independence up to the present day and calling for further interdisciplinary research on the topic. The present volume is, to say the least, an excellent point of departure for such research.

Letters from Kartini; An Indonesian feminist 1900-1904, translated and with an introduction by Joost Coté. Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1992, xxxv + 583 pp. ISBN 0.7326.0267.X. Price: AUD 29.95. NLG 45.- for customers in Europe, to be ordered from KITLV Press.

On feminism and nationalism; Kartini's letters to Stella Zeehandelaar 1899-1903, translated and with an introduction by Joost Coté. Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, xxiii + 129 pp. ISBN 0.7326.0835.X. Price: AUD 19.95. NLG 30.- for customers in Europe, to be ordered from KITLV Press.

ELSBETH LOCHER-SCHOLTEN

Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879-1904) does not need an extensive introduction. An early feminist and nationalist fighting for female education and against polygamy, she ultimately became an Indonesian national heroine. Her letters, written in Dutch to Dutch friends, were first published in the Netherlands in 1911. Because of the force of her pleas and her tragic fate, she has appealed to the imagination ever since. A fervent opponent of polygamy, she herself consented to become the third wife of the regent of Rembang, and died in childbirth.

Coté has done a great service to the Anglophone public by editing her letters in English. The first volume contains translations of the more than 100 letters from Kartini to Rosa Abendanon-Mandri and her husband J.H. Abendanon which were edited by F.G.P. Jaquet in 1987. The second contains fourteen letters to a Dutch pen-friend of her own age, the socialist feminist Stella Zeehandelaar. Until now the English-speaking world had to rely upon the unreliable selection by A.J. Symmers in *Letters of a Javanese princess*, a title which the modest Kartini would not have approved of herself.

Coté has done more than just translate and edit her letters. Both books are supplied with important introductions which carry the reader along and plunge him or her into Kartini's world and time. The introduction to *Letters from Kartini* provides an insightful analysis of the ambivalences of Kartini's position and the educational policies of the colonial government. Neither Javanese tradition nor pure 'European-ness' offered her a safe way out of the dilemmas of modernity. Her self-analysis, her longing for individual freedom and her huge sense of social responsibility, significant signs of a modern self-awareness, all reflected a concern with morality and justice in a Javanese context.

The fourteen letters in *On feminism and nationalism* repeat and summarize these themes. Their style is more forthright, less sentimental, and also less Javanese. No reports here about Javanese marriage or black magic, but rather a clear account of her difficult personal position in 1902. It was Kartini herself who, in the role of intermediary between her severely ill father and her step-sister, convinced the latter to marry polygamously and so maintained

peace in the household of the regent of Japara. In June 1903 she decided to follow her sister's example, out of love – not for her future husband, but for her father. Was it 'a lie to her whole being', as a devastated Stella wrote? No, a consistent step following upon her earlier succesful mediation.

In *On feminism*, Coté has added in italics those sentences which were deleted by Abendanon, the editor of the 1911 publication. The furious two pages on the treatment of the Javanese *controleur* Raden Mas Ismangoen by his Dutch colleagues offer insightful reading. Other passages illustrate the protective intentions of the original editor as well.

Letters from Kartini includes the letters from her sisters and husband, as well as the list of publications by and about Kartini, which were published by Jaquet. Following Jaquet, Coté has refrained from making annotations. Unlike his predecessor, unfortunately, he has not added an index of names. Worse, however, are the many typographic errors in both books, not only in Dutch names, but also in the English text. In one case (*On feminism*, p. 107) this even leads to a change of meaning: the journal *Algemeen Handelsblad* has become the *Algemeen Handlesbank* ('General Commercial Bank').

Another critical remark: at one point Coté situates the Adviser for Native Affairs Ch. Snouck Hurgronje together with H. Colijn among the bureaucratic rationalists who opposed the 'ethici', but seven pages later he rightly lists the same man as a major architect of the new colonial policy (*Letters*, pp. xxiv, xxxi). In part this inconsistency is no doubt related to the ambivalence of Snouck Hurgronje's position, but it may also reflect Coté's failure to define the term 'ethicus' in his introduction.

These, however, are critical notes in the margin of a great project for which the Anglophone world – scholars as well as a broader public interested in Indonesia – may be grateful. It offers them access to a unique mental world of female action and feeling at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite their occasional sentimentality, these letters are enlightening windows on the struggles, the constraints and the emotions of a Javanese upper class woman implicated in colonial modernity.

L. Manderson and M. Jolly (eds), *Sites of desire, economies of pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, xii + 367 pp. ISBN 0.226.50304.6. Price: USD 19.95.

ALISON MURRAY

First, I have to admit a personal interest in this volume, since a chapter which I submitted on the subject of sex workers' peer education in the Asia-Pacific was declined by the editors. However, on reading the finished volume it is apparent that Jolly and Manderson are primarily concerned with Western textual constructions of 'sexualities in Asia and the Pacific', some of them purely imaginary: the 'erotics of the exotic' rather than lived experiences of sexual identity and practice.

Ann Stoler's challenging (reprinted) essay sets the parameters for this theme of the Orientalist discourse of the desired (and despised) 'Other': from Freud's repressive thesis to Foucault's view of sexual obsession. The power of the bourgeois European male is inevitably expressed sexually. The Other is imagined as a passive, amenable, commodified Oriental woman, and this cross-cultural, usually heterosexual, intercourse arouses an ethnocentric negative reaction toward the prostitute-as-victim. Hence the authors' deconstructive focus on those fragmentary 'economies of pleasure' catering to the expat or tourist client, regardless of the fact that the colonial West did not create Asian and Pacific sex industries, and nor did Vietnam's GIs.

Thailand – in the form of the ubiquitous Patpong go-go dancer – is the foremost Western stereotype of the 'erotic exotic'. Hamilton regurgitates the assumption that this woman attracts the excessive libidinal desires of a type of unfulfilled (read perverted) Western man, although the encounter ends in disappointment and cynicism. Meanwhile both Porter and Law counter the 'victim' view of Asian sex workers with notions of individual agency and multiple identities. Law notes the preference for long-term affective relationships held by many bar girls in the Philippines and elsewhere, due in particular to the need to support dependents.

Women socialized into a culture which calls them the 'hind legs of the elephant' (in Thailand) or prescribes a 'destiny' serving one's husband (in Indonesia), may find Western mores as exotic as we theirs. Asians may equally say that Westerners are 'easy', from their own standpoint caught in a web of family obligations and complications. They can be attracted by the possibilities for access to wealth and escape (for instance in Aoi's view of O'Rourke in the much-debated *Good Woman of Bangkok*). I would argue that sex workers inevitably gravitate towards wealth and opportunity, regardless of gender or sexuality, as with the Bali beach gigolos with Australian women.

The first half of the book deals with colonial sexualities, the second half with more contemporary situations, and the last three chapters touch on the profound impact of HIV/AIDS. The 'sites of desire' are more specifically

Thailand/Burma, the Philippines and Polynesia/Melanesia, with a chapter by Sandra Buckley on AIDS education material in Japan, which finally confounds the slick East-West dichotomy.

Here the Japanese appear as the 'whites of Asia', conceiving AIDS as a foreign disease embodied in the female Thai immigrant sex worker. This highlights a crucial current issue of the tension between nationalism and globalization, the fear of illicit border crossings and new hybrids. Porter gives a sketch of such emerging juxtapositions – traditional farming clothes, MTV and AK-47 rifles in the 'cowboy land' of the Golden Triangle. Increasing flows of people, arms, drugs and information around the region beg much more attention than is suggested by references to 'trafficking in women'.

China and its diaspora and the Muslim countries do not appear although, as I have said, Asian sexualities per se are not much under consideration, with the exception of Jackson's excellent chapter on Thai homosexuality. He argues against giving too much emphasis to Western influence in analysing the insertion of 'gay' into existing concepts of man and kathoey (the unmanly male against which the real, complete man is defined). We need to interrogate the Western notion of an individual sexual self (compared with Melanesian notions, for instance), and the equation of sexual practice with sexual identity. Somewhat surprisingly, Jolly and Manderson argue against separating sexuality and reproduction, an accepted norm they impute to an excess of the 'gay lobby'.

Some discussion of popular texts (or 'historically situated social documents') is not convincing: Emmanuelle and South Pacific are particularly far removed from lived experiences. Manderson suggests that the film *The King and I* demands a feminization of (never colonized) Thailand beneath the West's masculine subjugation, and simultaneously that Anna represents a female West set against a barbaric masculine Thai King. Meanwhile Hamilton suggests from 'Bangkok Old Hand' stories that Thai women are prone to cut off men's penises (!); I have yet to see research on how the legions of penis-less-men in Thailand cope with their lives.

I am concerned, then, that parts of this volume further entrench a reduction of 'Oriental' sexuality to the passive erotic stereotype which it elsewhere hopes to debunk. Nevertheless these are wide-ranging and thought-provoking papers with continuing relevance for tourism especially. The authors offer a view of cross-cultural desire following Foucault's understanding of the history of Western sexuality, embedding the self and its other in the reproduction of power.

Harry A. Poeze, *Politiek-Politieele Overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Deel IV, 1935-1941. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1994, xciv + 485 pp. ISBN 90.6718.051.3. Price: NLG 60.-.

CHRIS PENDERS

In this fourth and final volume the original intention and format of the *Overzichten* has been maintained. On the basis of information supplied by colonial officials, the police, and the intelligence services, including the Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst (PID) and Centrale Inlichtingen Dienst (CID), secret reports dealing with the Indonesian nationalist movement were prepared for the use of selected high-echelon colonial bureaucrats. The objective was to provide extra information that could not be gathered from the European press, the *Overzichten van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers* (IPO), and the Volksraad proceedings. The data were presented under five categories: the extreme radical, the nationalist and Muslim, and Chinese movements, indigenous labour unions, and overseas reports and literature classed as seditious.

As nationalist activities had calmed down somewhat, in 1937 the colonial government decided to reduce the volume and frequency of the reports. This decision was reversed in 1939 when as a result of the outbreak of World War II and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940, Indonesian demands for freedom had become more strident.

In an important seventy-eight page introduction Poeze critically reviews the Dutch colonial government's attitude and reaction to the Indonesian freedom struggle. The emphasis, he points out, was on persons and organizations considered dangerous to 'peace and order'. Hence the story became distorted as the main goal was repression rather than a willingness to understand what was really going on in the indigenous world. There is, for example, no mention in the reports of the Sutardjo Petition of 1936, and the impact of the Depression on the nationalist movement is also ignored.

Despite such omissions, many useful snippets of information can nevertheless be gathered from the reports. There is, for example, an extensive treatment of the genesis of the Parindra, including some wishful thinking about the possibility that this organization might take over the leadership of the nationalist movement from the PPPKI (pp. 54-8). The reports on the position of the Communists and other Leftist parties in the Netherlands with respect to the Indonesian freedom struggle (p. 66) are also interesting, as are those on Ratu Adil (messianic) disturbances. One argument developed by the writers is that the colonial government's policy of repressing the radical nationalist movement had seriously eroded the impact of the Partindo and the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia on the masses (p. 68). The fact that the threat

of Fascism was an essential factor causing the radical nationalists to cooperate with the colonial government is overlooked. Japanese attempts to influence the nationalist movement were monitored regularly. During 1938 and 1939 no reports appeared on the radical nationalists (pp. 204-5). Information is given on measures taken to prevent the import of both Marxist and Fascist publications.

To obtain a fuller understanding of the extent and fervour of the nationalist movement, of course, it is necessary to consult Indonesian writings and documents alongside these colonial reports. Particularly helpful in this context are the memoirs of Hatta, Abu Hanifah, Adam Malik, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Subardjo, the series of autobiographies published by Gunung Agung, and the LIPI recording project. Nevertheless, the Poeze series undoubtedly adds an important dimension to the history of the Indonesian nationalist movement at the end of the Dutch colonial period.

Henk Schulte Nordholt, *The spell of power; A history of Balinese politics 1650-1940*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996, ix + 389 pp. [VKI 170.] ISBN 90.6718.090.4. Price: NLG 60.-.

KATHRYN ROBINSON

The South Balinese dynasty of Mengwi provides the narrative material for this engrossing account of the nature of power in Bali. The book takes us through the rise of the dynasty in the eighteenth century, through vicissitudes of power until it faced the crisis of Dutch colonial authority in the twentieth century, leading ultimately to a new fixity and formalism in the political system. Schulte Nordholt's book is an important new contribution to the debates about the nature of power in pre-colonial Balinese kingdoms, which, since the publication of Geertz's *Negara* (1980), have had a central place in the ongoing debates about power and authority in Southeast Asia.

In crafting this eminently readable narrative, Schulte Nordholt makes use both of the extensive manuscript tradition in Bali and of the Dutch colonial sources, as well as making good use of oral histories. Throughout the book he takes up the historiographical issues involved in relying on these differing sources, for example addressing the degree to which chronology, as opposed to narrative structure, is involved in the ordering of the Mengwi chronicles.

The book takes issue with some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of Balinese rule. Schulte Noordholt holds up to critical scrutiny the textual tradition which holds that the Mengwi kings 'derived

their legitimation from their origins in Madjapahit, from which noble lineages fanned out over the island both genealogically and politically' (p. 34). He argues that the situation in Mengwi was at variance with the model of the 'Theatre State' which Geertz proposed in *Negara*. For Schulte Nordholt, 'power' has a material base. He discusses, for example, the relation between dynasty and irrigation, noting that the literature on South Bali has failed to appreciate the importance of the nobility in *sawah* irrigation, overemphasizing instead the local irrigation networks (*subak*). He contests Geertz's assertion that there was no systematic connection between land distribution and political authority, providing contrary evidence from Mengwi of a 'strong coherence between political power, the distribution of land, and the relation between the "owner" and the worker of the land' (p. 60). Access to land was one means of binding followers to the *puri* (p. 130). Violence was also central to the exercise of royal authority, not least in relation to the extensive slave trade, which led people to seek strong rulers (who were also the major slave traders!) (p. 43). The kings whom he depicts are active leaders who directly order the world they live in, not the 'immobile and even anonymous object of ritual' (p. 76) which he sees in Geertz's portrayal.

The spell of power makes interesting use of Tambiah's model of the galactic polity, stressing the central importance of the relation between royal centres and their satellites, the fragile nature of these connections (involving reciprocal relations that had to be attended to constantly), and the role played by the shifts in these alliances in the rise and fall of dynastic fortunes. Loyalty could not be taken for granted, but had to be courted. Growth in the power of the centre paradoxically enabled the satellites to strengthen their own local power bases (p. 53), sometimes to the point where they became potential rivals to the centre itself.

Ritual and the brahmanic priests were also central to the exercise of power, with movements of priests accompanying shifts in power relations between centres. Temples connected critical elements: the ancestors of the dynasty, the links between 'gods in the mountains, the dynastic centre and the sea; and the concern to assure fertility and the continuation of the agricultural cycle' (p. 73). These connections were symbolized in the annual procession of the gods from the mountains to the sea, which linked the human life cycle and the agricultural cycle to hierarchy and the power of the Mengwi dynasty (p. 136). The ritual order provided a point of stability, a symbolic assertion of hierarchy, in times of chaos. While agreeing that 'the pura could not exist without the puri', he rejects Geertz's view that the royal palace was a temple (p. 76).

Kinship was very significant both to dynastic succession and to centre-satellite relationships, but this did not necessarily give them a fixed and predictable character. In many instances usurpers 'played the system' to achieve

their ends, making creative use of adoption and marriage in order to exploit the privileged status accorded to particular genealogical relations. Fluid shifts in power were central to the organization of the *negara*, rather than implying evolution or decay.

The analytical model of the precolonial system which Schulte Nordholt develops is brought into sharp relief by the changes of the colonial period. Dutch expansion in Bali threatened the political order, in part because of its challenge to the economic power of the royal dynasties. Colonial authority reduced the level of overt violence, but this did not mean the end of all conflict. Dutch 'meddling' led to the creation of new geographically based political divisions in place of dispersed groups of followers (p. 207). The Dutch finally managed to replace the fluidity of the old political system with a 'hierarchy imposed and fixed from above', a 'well-defined "traditional" society with [...] [d]istricts, 'castes', villages and *subak* (irrigation collectives)' (p. 217). This formalization was accompanied by the demise of the ritual dimensions of power.

In fashioning the multiple sources into a narrative concerning the rise and fall of Mengwi, Schulte Nordholt has produced an immensely readable book with 'larger than life' characters and gripping tales of political opportunism and intrigue, as well as one of the most interesting recent contributions to the analysis of power in Southeast Asian polities.

Carl A. Trocki (ed.), *Gangsters, democracy, and the state in Southeast Asia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1998, 94 pp. [Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publication 17.] ISBN 0.87727.134.8.

ERIC TAGLIACOZZO

This is a small edited compilation, but it focuses on a large and important theme. Carl Trocki and his contributors have written a volume on the 'shifting dynamics of centripetal vs. centrifugal tendencies' in Southeast Asian politics, a process which is examined here in the Philippines, Thailand, and Burma. Though slim, this book will be a solid contribution to the field in many ways, especially in its in-depth treatment of savvy local politicians. Trocki does not beat around the bush about the morality of these figures: 'most of them are murderers, and those who have not themselves murdered have ordered others to do so on their behalf'. This assertion may be difficult

to prove collectively, but that may be Trocki's point: these men have integrated themselves so well into the fabric of political life that such actions do not effectively disqualify them from power. Far from it. The more ruthless such figures have been, the higher many have risen. Their interactions with their respective states form the subject of this volume.

Mary Callahan starts the discussion off with an examination of several murders in Burma in the period 1948-1958. She shows how the Burmese military rose during this time from a fragmented, lawless corps (itself perpetrating much violence in the countryside) into a national force charged with controlling local kingpins. The KMT presence in Burma, and the threat that the CCP might come after them, both served as partial stimuli to effect this change. Callahan traces the rise of this centralized power over a decade, and says the conventional wisdom that military dominance started in 1958 is actually wrong. These were older, evolutionary processes, the complexity of which she traces very convincingly.

James Ockey continues the narrative with an examination of the chaophos, or 'godfathers' of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Thailand. Ockey asks why such figures have been able to move so freely between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' society in the kingdom, and points to several integrated answers. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of his argument, which encompasses economics, history, and politics, is that Thai culture allowed this diffusion because of particular cultural predilections. Achieving the status of local 'big man' was an age-old aim in Thai society, and was not frowned upon socially, whatever the means might have been to get there. Theravada Buddhist beliefs that men can atone for wrongdoing by later practicing good works also helped. Gangsters maneuvered themselves into powerful positions – subsequently dispensing some of their booty – while picking up clients (and silencing critics) in the process.

There are two essays on the Philippines. John Sidel's study of gangsterism in Cavite may be the best in the volume, sporting a level of local 'thick description' of which even Clifford Geertz might be proud. Some of the statistics he has assembled to support his assertions have an almost surreal quality. Between 1946 and 1972, Sidel tells us, 8 Cavite mayors, 10 police chiefs, and scores of vice-mayors, municipal councilors, and barrio captains have been murdered, all in the contest for and pursuit of local power. Sidel sees in local configurations of access to land, and in Cavite's outstretched coastline (strategically placed for smuggling to Manila and beyond) partial explanations for these figures. Patricio Abinales, the other contributor on the Philippines, asks a different question: how have Muslim political brokers in Mindanao managed their local affairs with one hand, and a changing national political structure with the other? Abinales is particularly good on showing the demographic dimensions to this equation, arguing that local *datu* did not

play the 'Muslim card' in the power game until after their influence was threatened by incoming Christian settlers. Local power politics in Mindanao, and its relationship to larger configurations in Manila, then also underwent rapid change. The contribution of this volume is its demonstration of the many faces – varied, violent, and continually changing – of these ongoing processes.

Tom van den Berge, *Karel Frederik Holle; Theeplanter in Indië, 1829-1896*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1998, 307 pp. ISBN 90.351.1969.X. Prijs: NLG 39.90.

GERARD TERMORSHUIZEN

Europeanen 'vielen in de kolonie omhoog', om Multatuli te citeren. Zij hadden de macht en oefenden die uit over een in hun ogen achterlijk volk. Verreweg de meeste in Indië neergestreken Europeanen lieten zich hun machtspositie en vermeende superioriteit graag aanleunen. Zij waren gekomen voor het geld en bedienden zich van inlanders om zich daarvan zo rijkelijk en snel mogelijk te voorzien. Uitzonderingen waren er ook: totoks die de achterkant zagen van het eigenbelang, die kritiek uitoefenden op de uitbuiting van de bevolking en die de opheffing van de inlander beschouwden als een dure plicht. Onder die idealisten heeft Karel Frederik Holle een heel bijzondere plaats ingenomen. Over deze unieke persoonlijkheid en diens gedurende een lange reeks van jaren aan de Indische samenleving bewezen diensten heeft Tom van den Berge een goed boek geschreven.

Veertien jaar oud was Holle toen hij in de kolonie kwam. Na een snelle carrière in gouvernementsdienst, werd hij eind jaren vijftig administrateur van een theeonderneming in de Preanger. Holle en de Preanger hebben elkaar nooit meer losgelaten. Lief had hij dit land en verbonden voelde hij zich met zijn bevolking. Als geen ander Europeaan voor en na hem beheerste hij haar taal, kende hij haar zeden en gewoonten, en trok hij zich haar noden en behoeften aan. Hij was een man van de daad, maar dan wel een die eerst goed nadacht voordat hij aan de slag ging. Hij deed goed, niet vanuit impulsieve opwellingen, maar vanuit een weldoordacht concept. De levensomstandigheden van de gewone Soendanees wenste hij te verbeteren, zonder daarbij echter de Europese commerciële belangen te veronachtzamen. Hij was een 'utilitarist' die de belangen van gouvernement en ondernemer verenigbaar achtte met die van de inheemse bevolking. Holles doel was, aldus Van den Berge, 'het grootste geluk voor het grootste aantal'.

In 1865 begon hij in de buurt van Garoet, op een gehuurd stuk paradij-

selijke wildernis, zijn eigen theeplantage: Waspada ('mooi uitzicht') noemde hij haar. Een modelplantage werd het, waar geld werd verdiend en waar het prettig toeven en werken was. Maar Holle dacht groter dan zijn eigen onderneming. Zijn ambities de gewone man vooruit te helpen, strekten zich uit tot ver over de grenzen van de Preanger heen. Praktisch waren zijn ideeën, stevig op de grond zijn eigen voeten, zichzelf niet te goed voelend om – ongehoord en tot dusver ongezien – op z'n blote kaki's in de sawah de boeren voor te doen hoe ze hun rijst beter konden doen gedijen.

Om zijn strevingen te kunnen verwezenlijken zocht hij zowel de medewerking van het gouvernement als de vriendschap en loyaliteit van kepala's en penghoeloe's. Van bijzondere betekenis was zijn voor het leven gesloten verbond met de hoofdpenghoeloe van Garoet, Moehamad Moesa, zijn grootste steun en toeverlaat die, doordat hij Moesa's zuster huwde, bovendien zijn zwager werd.

En Holle verwierf zich die medewerking en loyaliteit, vanwege zijn alom bewonderde kennis van land en volk, z'n zinnige voorstellen en onbaatzuchtigheid; z'n warme en enthousiasmerende optreden deed de rest. 'Wat hem uniek maakt', schrijft Van den Berge, 'is dat hij tegelijkertijd toegang had tot de gouverneur-generaal in Buitenzorg, de hoge ambtenaren in Batavia, de resident in Bandoeng, de regenten en panghoeloes in de Preanger, de boeren en hadji's in Garoet en de fabrieksarbeiders en theepluksters op Waspada'. Tot 'adviseur honorair van inlandsche zaken' werd hij benoemd, in de handen van juist deze man een ideale want invloedrijke functie.

'Vriend van den landman' was Holle. Als 'verlicht' man zag hij het geluk en de voorspoed van de tani het beste gediend onder westers bestuur en onder westerse invloed. Dat hij in dat proces van beïnvloeding een voorname rol zag weggelegd voor de inheemse aristocratie was vanzelfsprekend: geef die elite een westerse scholing, bind haar aan het gouvernement en de zegenende effecten op het gewone volk zullen niet uitblijven.

Holle was dus veel meer dan theeplanter. Over zijn verdiensten voor de inheemse landbouw (deel I), zijn initiatieven ten behoeve van de cultuur en wetenschap, de taalstudie en het onderwijs (deel II) en zijn bemoeienissen met het bestuur en de politiek (deel III) gaat Van den Berges studie. In een Proloog ('Een blijver in Indië') worden onder meer wat biografische gegevens vermeld van de jonge Holle, voordat hij in 1843 met zijn familie naar Indië trok. Uiterst summier is dat biografische gedeelte. Een beetje al te kaal mijns inziens, omdat ik me sterk maak dat intensief – ik geef het toe: heel tijdrovend – speurwerk in velerlei richtingen wat meer naar boven zou hebben gebracht. Ook persoonlijke informatie over Holle in zijn tweeënvijftig Indische jaren is trouwens schaars: in zijn brieven, zo stelde Van den Berge vast, had hij het maar hoogst zelden over zichzelf of zijn naasten.

Laat Van den Berge ons wat Holles 'intieme' biografie betreft met nogal wat vragen zitten, tevreden stelt hij ons met zijn betoog over Holles veelzijdige arbeid, de invloed die hij had op het bestuursbeleid ten aanzien van de inheemse bevolking, de erkenning die hem ten deel viel als ook over de tegenwerking, ja zelfs miskenning, die hij, met zijn uitgesproken ideeën en ambitieuze eigenzinnigheid, onvermijdelijk ondervond. En diepte krijgt dat betoog, omdat Van den Berge niet verzuimt Holles leven en werk te voorzien van een solide historische omlijsting. Niet minder verdienstelijk is dat Van den Berge goed schrijft, op een causerende toon die hinderlijk vakjargon en geleerd vertoon uitsluit. Om de inhoud en de wijze waarop deze wordt gepresenteerd verdient zijn boek een breed publiek.

Tom E. Dutton, *Koiari*. München: Lincom Europa, 1996, 77 pp.
[Languages of the World/Materials 10]. ISBN 3.929075.10.5.

LOURENS DE VRIES

The *Languages of the World/Materials* series is an inexpensive and low-threshold forum for grammatical sketches and language documentation. The scarcity of information on some linguistic areas is so extreme that publication even of incomplete and sketchy descriptions is important. New Guinea, with its 1,000 or so distinct languages, is one such area which we know far too little about and Dutton's description of Koiari in this series is a most welcome and intriguing contribution. Koiari is spoken by about 1,600 people just inland of Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. Koiari is a member of the Koiarian family, one of the around sixty non-Austronesian language families of New Guinea.

Although typologically in most respects a typical Papuan language, Koiari has some intriguing features. The verb system for example makes dual reference to subjects and objects, with one set of suffixes reflecting the number of subjects and objects ergative-absolutely, the other agreeing with subjects nominatively.

Unfortunately, Dutton leaves us a little in the dark with respect to how much time he spent in the Koiari area, in what role he did his fieldwork, whether he speaks Koiari himself and what the role of direct elicitation via contact-languages was in the collection of his data, stating only (p. 5) that the sketch 'is based on materials collected sporadically over the past thirty years in the village of Kailakinumu'. In the framework of a series like *Languages of the World* it seems important to give a more detailed indication of the process

of data acquisition.

The Koiari have been in contact with non-neighbouring peoples ever since the 1870s. Tok Pisin and English are increasingly used by younger Koiari alongside the local lingua franca, Motu, an Austronesian language thought to have been present in the area for some 2,000 years. The long period of Koiari-Motu contact is one of reasons why Koiari is scientifically important. Having addressed the Koiari-Motu contact issue in a separate article, Dutton does not treat it systematically in this description. Since it is very likely that the process of generational erosion of Koiari will continue, this well-written description comes just in time.

Bruce M. Knauff, *South coast New Guinea cultures; History, comparison, dialectic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, xiii + 298 pp. ISBN 0.521.41882.8 (cloth), ISBN 0.521.42931.5 (paperback). Price: USD 16.95 (paperback).

LOURENS DE VRIES

The first half of Knauff's book is devoted to the (colonial) history of South Coast New Guinea, the methodology of comparing cultures and to reflection on ethnographic analysis in general. This forms the background for the rest of the book, in which Knauff compares seven South Coast New Guinea cultures of both Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea: the Asmat, Kolopom, Marind, Kiwai, Purari, Elema and Trans-Fly peoples.

Although the first half of the book is interesting and may play a certain role in the ongoing debate among anthropologists about the methods and aims of anthropology, I think that the second half of the book will turn out to be its more enduring and important contribution to the discipline. Knauff succeeds here in creating an insightful synthesis out of a mass of highly disparate sources, with as a main conclusion that non-Austronesian South Coast New Guinea particularly emphasized the twin themes of the sexual creation of fertility and the violent taking of lifeforce through headhunting.

Since the Marind dominate the ethnographic sources, they play a central role in the overall picture drawn by Knauff. It would take synthetic monographs on some of the other groups, especially the Asmat, to see to what extent the inevitable Marind bias of the book has distorted the picture.

A minor problem of the book is the use of the linguistic notion non-Austronesian to define a culture area ('non-Austronesian South Coast New Guinea'). I doubt very much whether the linguistic criterion 'Austronesian'

versus 'non-Austronesian' can be used to distinguish cultures in New Guinea. The South Coast of New Guinea itself provides one of the most dramatic illustrations of the general uselessness of linguistic criteria in defining culture areas: the linguistic gap between the Marind and Asmat families is both typologically and genetically very wide. In fact, the gap between Austronesian and neighbouring non-Austronesian language families of New Guinea tends to be far less wide.

The Asmat languages line up with the Awyu and Ok languages and with mountain families like the Dani and Mek families. The Marind family stands apart as a linguistic enigma (thus far only the Inanwatan family of the Bird's Head has been mentioned in the literature as possibly linked to the Marind family). But this sharp linguistic discontinuity coexists with the strong cultural continuities between the Asmat and Marind so skillfully outlined by Knauff.
